

Real

by hollywar

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Summary: She hit his chest with a reassuring thud. Beth's sobbing so hard and clinging to him so fiercely that when he falls, she tumbles down with him.

Real

**\*\*Author's Note:** Beth was taken to Martin's cabin â€" not the hospital. Carol and Tyreese save her. Definite plot holes in this story, but I just couldn't handle the end of Coda. Bethyl reunion because I'm not over it. **\*\***

**\*\*Real\*\***

Daryl didn't hear anything or anyone.

He can't even hear Rick saying his name sharply, only a mere foot away from him. He can't process anything at the moment because all he can think, feel, smell, see is her.

Her.

Maggie lets out a gut wrenching screech, taking off towards the cabin she's currently making her way out of. He sees her doe eyes widen, sees the look of panic that crosses her face before she realizes that it is in fact the eldest Greene sibling running towards her. He can tell the moment the daze clears from her mind, because her eyes widen and she embraces the much sturdier sister, he can tell it almost knocks her over. Can tell that she doesn't want to be in the embrace.

He realizes that Carol and Tyreese are there as well, embracing the others with laughs of disbelief â€" disbelief that they would stumble upon each other yet again, in such a fucked up world. Sasha lets out a sob, one that isn't the accustomed sob of terror in this new world. It's of happiness, it's a sob of relief as she rushes into her

brother's arms.

He then notices the baby in Carol's arms, notices Rick's face crumble as he rushes to take back the daughter he had thought he had lost forever. Watches as what is left of the Grimes family huddles together, crying happy tears, both Rick's children pressed into his chest as he looks to the sky. Probably thinking about Lori, thinking about how she is the only one of them that hadn't made it.

The scene unfolds in front of him, but all he can do is watch as his feet cement to the forest floor beneath him.

He's happy Lil' Asskicker made it. But the relief he should have felt for his best friend, no brother, was still stuck inside him somewhere because he was watching her.

She closed her eyes as Maggie tugged her close, he could tell by the redness of her face that she is tearing up " and rightfully so. The whole time that they were together out there she had been on a mission to find her sister again.

Glenn is quickly pulled in to the embrace and the couple are laughing laughs of pure and honest to God happiness, that he knows they can't tell the blonde isn't joining in. It's been awhile since anyone had felt anything remotely close to happiness, and he watches it with shaded eyes.

And then he sees when something else clicks in her brain. Sees her slightly try to push her sister and brother-in-law away so she can scan the rest of the group, the rest of the \_family\_, searching. Her blue eyes are wide and " \_hopeful\_.

He's standing a little bit behind Abraham, and her eyes don't catch him immediately. He knows he ain't too small of a man, but with the freckled fucking lumberjack beside him, he doesn't really blame her for not noticing him.

And then the dread comes.

It forms in the pit of his stomach, and he swore his heart turned to steel in that exact moment. The moment that her eyes sweep over him, he stills. Maybe she wasn't looking for him like he was looking for her.

He couldn't beat it off with a stick, even if he tried. Merle's rough cackle echoed loud and unwanted in the depths of his head.

He watches as Maggie asks who she's looking for, who could she possibly be looking for now that the sisters were reunited. But Daryl knows that she saw those signs for Glenn, knows she saw the signs that didn't have her name on them too " knew she recognized deep in her heart that her sister hadn't been looking for her.

She doesn't acknowledge her sister, turns to Rick.

Rick isn't a stupid man. Knows more about this group than he likes to put on, knows more about Daryl than maybe he even knows about himself. Because as soon as she turns to him, Rick nods his head, casting his eyes to where Daryl stood.

Her eyes follow Rick's, and that was that.

It felt like forever " it felt like a thousand years had passed as he watched her blue eyes turned from panic to" to \_relief\_.

He watched as she forcefully removed Maggie's arms from around her middle when the older woman wasn't ready to let go. He watched at the bewildered look that came across the face of not only Maggie, but Glenn too. Carol, Tyreese, Michonne, Carl, even his Lil' Asskicker seemed to notice that the axis of the world had shifted " and not just because the dead was suddenly walking around.

It changed because blue met blue.

It changed because Daryl and Beth were staring at each other.

A guttural yelp escaped from her, he notices as she takes the first step towards him. He can't move, can't say anything. Beth Greene is making her way towards him at a run " a \_desperate\_ run as he notices how quick she is. How quick she is on her feet now that it seems her ankle isn't prohibiting her anymore.

That fact startles him; it's been \_forever\_.

He watches with wide eyes as she's moving people out of the way, as she clumsily teeters and lands herself right in the middle of his chest, her tiny arms squeezing his middle so hard it hurts. He hears himself make an \_ouf\_ noise as she hits his chest with a thud. A reassuring thud that this isn't a dream " wait.

This is a dream.

It \_has\_ to be a dream, right?

Rick.

His eyes find his friends in less than a second. Unless separated by force, Rick Grimes and Daryl Dixon knew where to find one another. Knew that the other would always be there, no matter what. Unconditionally. Even though Rick was" is a cop, and Daryl was never nothing more than some redneck trash.

Rick's face melts into complete ease " something Daryl wasn't ever used to seeing. Especially since the fall of the prison, the supposed loss of the youngest Grimes, hell he hadn't saw Rick really smile since Lori. But yet, there Rick stood in all of his gangly beard glory, nodding his head with an upturned curve in his lips, confirming what he knew Daryl was asking.

This was \_real\_.

\_Holy fuck this is real\_.

Beth's sobbing so hard and clinging to him so fiercely that when he falls, she tumbles down with him. His arms circle around her small delicate waist, so tiny that he felt as if he were going to break her. But she's \_here\_, \_she's \_alive\_, and he knows that ain't nothing ever going to happen to her again.

There is something bubbling just above the surface that he doesn't

quite understand. Something that made him tuck her into his body a little more, suffocate the both of them a little bit more with their choked out sobs.

"\_You found me\_," she hiccupped, and he could feel the wetness of her tears soaking through the front of his only flannel shirt he had left. But he didn't care. He could tell she was struggling to breathe, struggling to come to terms that the search for each other was finally over.

His calloused hand rests in her golden blonde hair, the same shade of hair that haunted his dreams for the past, what, month? Year? Decade? He pushes her head into his chest, aware of the others stares but not finding the strength within himself to care. He tucked her head underneath his chin, smelling her somehow refreshing scent in this new world that proved to be stagnate. It was just him and her for so long, now that they're pressed up against each other again it's easy to forget that they aren't alone.

He notices that she's not the only one with a wet face.

"Holy fuck Beth, you're \_here\_."

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After the moment was over, when Maggie had finally had enough and cleared her throat, Daryl realized where he was and what he was doing.

In a heap of a pile on the ground with Beth Greene on top on him, both of their arms clinging to each other like it was their last life line. He supposed she was; his last life line. Had he not found her â€" no. He wasn't even going there.

It took a second to collect himself, took another second to stand up with the death grip she had on him.

He watched as Beth took in her sister, a flush on her face as she realized that everyone in the group had just been witness to their more than friendly reunion. She untangled her arms from around his middle, and he had a moment of panic â€" what was he \_doing\_? But then she gripped his arm closest to her just as tightly as she had been holding onto his middle, turning to the group again. Maybe this was okay.

"We got out together," she easily explained. There were nods of acceptance, but he knew that this was far from over â€" knew that she had a lot more explaining to do because he had been tight lipped since he had returned with the group. They had questions that he hadn't been able to answer, maybe he never would be able to answer. "I didn't think I'd ever see him again."

The group fell silent, the only sounds to be heard around the cabin were of Judith babbling her normal baby gibberish. Daryl was suddenly very envious of the small baby, she didn't have a care in the world â€" to Judith the world hadn't ended. She was much too young to understand the hardships going on around her.

"Beth," Maggie began, filling the silence. At her voice many of the others tapered off, the family who hadn't seen Judith turned to her,

cooing at the infant. No one wanted to be a part of the inevitable argument that was about to take place. "Can we talk?"

Daryl felt the grip on his arm tighten, and knew this wasn't going to be good.

"No."

Even though everyone was pretending to be occupied, there was an awkwardness that hung in the air, thicker than the scent of the dead even. Maggie's face contorted. He looked to Carol "whom he had yet to speak to, but was greatly relieved to see. A knowing look passed over the older woman's face, who was staring at the dainty blonde attached to his arm. They had been surviving together, and the two had always spoke. He figured that Beth had confided in Carol.

It didn't take him long to figure out how this was going to go.

"What? Beth I'm your sister, the least you could do is talk to me!" Maggie wasn't okay, and Glenn noticed because Daryl saw the Asian man grab the eldest Greene siblings elbow.

Beth's face tightened. He could tell she was mad "he could close his eyes and picture her giving him the finger when she had been dead set on finding the group. She had been sure that they were looking for them; for her. There was no way in hell she was going to stay in that little camp and eat burnt snake with him when Maggie could be looking for her.

"\_It wouldn't kill you to have a little faith."\_

Beth turned to Glenn instead, and he knew what was coming even before she opened her mouth. He knew that she had seen them all along, because hell there was one not a mile from here.

"I'm glad she found you, Glenn. The signs must have helped, yeah?"

Maggie's face darkened into a look of regret, a look of pure and utter guilt. Good, he thought. Everyone had written Beth Greene off as a weak little girl. One of the weak ones who had no real survival skills. Beth wasn't like Maggie, and because of that they had wrote her off. But Beth, he knew, was a hell of a lot stronger than Maggie herself.

Beth had faith.

Glenn had the decency to look upset, grabbing onto his wife who looked like she had all intentions of walking over to where Beth still stood, holding onto Daryl as if she would be taken away again. Hell he appreciated it because he was still stuck in his hindering thoughts that this could all be a dream.

"Don't you dare "Maggie began, only to be cut off.

"Don't you dare, Maggie." Beth cut her off, releasing her grip from his arm. He could tell she was getting worked up, could tell she was about to snap. Beth wasn't the quiet little babysitter anymore that everyone had made her out to be at the prison. He knew all too well

that her temper was now at the forefront of her personality; he knew how to see it and he knew her next move even before she did.

"While you had me wrote off as dead, I made Daryl traipse all around these woods for you! I wanted to find you and I wasn't going to stop until I did! I made him work his guts out to get us all back together, and you didn't even care. You didn't even look for me."

Her voice was menacing and all eyes were now directed to the girl who would once never talk to anyone, let alone her sister this way. She was hurt, she was cut to the very bone by her sister actions. It was all very clear, to not just him anymore. But to everyone.

"I got taken and tortured because I was the one who made us vulnerable. All because I was trying to find my sister who had already forgotten about me."

Maggie's face blanched. It felt like all the air in his lungs had escaped and didn't plan on returning. He couldn't breathe. He couldn't get over the guilt that had plagued him since he had lost her. She had been tortured?

Then the rage set in. He couldn't control it, and he bit back the war cry that he knew would bring unwanted attention to them. He couldn't do that to baby Judith but Christ, he needed to get the hell out of here for a minute. How could she possibly think this was her fault? He was the one that had lost her. He had been the one to tell her to run. It was his fault.

His wild eyes found Rick's, who looked back at him with a warning eye. This ain't about you, it's about her. Get yourself together.

"Beth," Maggie croaked out, angry sobs wracking her frame and her husband had to literally hold on her to keep her back from the blonde. Rick was standing beside them, making sure that no one would move towards the obvious seething songbird. He looked at Daryl and the hunter knew he had to do something. Needed to get them out of this situation.

"Save it," Beth replied curtly before he had a chance to take action, walking away from the cabin, from the group she had been desperately trying to reunite, and away from him.

All he could do was follow, feeling eyes on his retreating wings.

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They walked through the thick overgrowth of the forest surrounding them for hours. The sun had moved considerably far in the sky before she had it in her to take a breather. She knew she wasn't alone, but yet she didn't look back. Didn't have to; knew who it was because he made no noise. Like the way she now moved through the woods. Had it not been him, she would have ran; would've ran and never looked back.

She had been stuck here in that cabin for about a month. She had cried in that cabin, she had yelled and screamed as loud as her lungs

would let her. She had bled in that cabin, and the further she walked from it " the further she walked away from the group with \_him,\_ the more she was able to breathe. She was beginning to breathe again since she had been taken away from him.

She knew he was having his own internal struggles, and it took her a moment to collect herself before she turned to face him.

It broke her heart.

It broke all of her that was left to break, which wasn't much.

The look on his face had said it all, and she didn't need words. Throughout the months they had spent together, they had become accustomed to the looks and the facial expressions of one another. Even though she had tried back then to fill in some of the silence, it wasn't needed. Words were not needed with the bond that the two had, not remotely erased in the absence of each other.

He thought it was his fault.

She tugged him to her, and was relieved that he didn't protest. Warmed when he returned the action and slipped his arms around her as well. On the walk out here she had argued with herself if she was allowed to touch him or not. They hadn't been very touchy to begin with, but by the end he had allowed her to place a gentle hand on his elbow, had let her console him. She had spent her month locked away in that cabin wondering what could have been.

Much like he had back at the cabin, he sunk to the forest floor, taking her down with him. She cried then, letting herself \_feel\_. It was never hard to feel when Daryl Dixon was around, it seemed. She didn't sob, didn't make much noise at all. It was only because he had expert ears that she knew he would hear her.

It was quiet for so long that when he spoke it startled her.

"'M gonna find em," he grunted in his thick voice, thicker from the emotion he was holding below the surface. "Find em and rip em limb to limb."

Even through her tears she let out a strangled laugh. There was no humor to it, however. He could see her face, the horror residing there. It churned his insides, almost to a point of no return. Had she not been soundly in his arms, he wasn't sure what he would do. Dixon's were always act now, think later kind of people.

"Tyreese beat you to it," she revealed. "Him, Carol and Judith just showed up one day. Don't know how they found the cabin, didn't ask. They had him taken care of as soon as they realized it was me."

He didn't press her to continue, but he knew she would anyways.

"Some crazy guy, knocked me out before he got me in that car. Daryl I \_tried\_ to get back to you, I tried so hard " " "

He cut her off by pushing her head back into his chest. He couldn't take it right now. There was a part of him that wondered if he would ever want to know the full story. "Ran all night. Most of the next

day too. My fault, Beth, ain't on you."

She didn't dignify that with an answer.

"I thought about that day I made you leave that little camp you made, made you leave the rest of that \_fucking\_ snake behind." He raised his eyebrows. Granted the Beth Greene of the prison certainly did not curse, but the new, gone through hell and back Beth, did. "I prayed and I wished so many times that I could go back to that moment with youâ€|" she trailed off.

He remembered the moment she was talking about, he did. He just wouldn't have assumed that it was such a monumental point in their survival together for her. He remembered the moonshine shack, the funeral home. He remembered carrying her through the fields on his back. The \_serious\_ piggybacks.

He didn't have time to respond, but then again he was never one for words.

"Every time I was being â€" "She gulped, shaking her head at the memories he knew she was trying to rid herself of. "I thought of you, you know. I think the memory of our time together got me through most of it."

"\_Oh.\_"

He closed his eyes at her words. Closed his eyes at the fact that he had been doing the same thing â€" had been replaying their conversations in his head over and over again. He dreamed of her, dreamed of that car taking away the only good thing left in his life. Hell he hadn't had much, ever, and was used to life taking away everything dear to him. But Beth Greene wasn't one of them. She would always be something that was irreplaceable to him.

He needed her.

"Beth." He said her name, and she nodded her head; didn't need him to continue. He was relieved to have this back.

"I know," she said. "Me too, Daryl Dixon."

So they sat there on the forest floor in a heap of tangled limbs and strangled tears. They didn't speak about her time in captivity, they didn't talk about his journey without her. Didn't talk about the group that was waiting back at the cabin for them. Because right now, arms wrapped around each other, they had all they needed to survive.

\*\*Thank you for reading, please leave all feedback, good or bad, in a comment.\*\*

End  
file.